

**409.9 Minimum Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner Designation.**

(a) NRCS certified conservation planner candidates must complete all modules of the NRCS Conservation Planning Course (Modules 1-9) or equivalent as determined appropriate and approved by the Tennessee State Conservationist.

(b) Candidates must possess and demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- (1) Understanding of the National Planning Procedures Handbook.
- (2) Skill in applying the nine-step NRCS Conservation Planning Process.
- (3) Ability to plan and implement conservation practices common to the geographic work area.
- (4) Knowledge of NRCS Field Office Technical Guide standards and specifications for conservation practices in the State.
- (5) Skill in applying the approved erosion prediction technology (RUSLE2) in the planning process.
- (6) Skill in using site vulnerability assessment tools as required in Statements of Work to plan and apply conservation practices.
- (7) Knowledge of Federal, State, and local laws and regulations which affect conservation planning and application decisions with clients.
- (8) Skill in applying the approved pest management technology (WINPST) in the planning process.

(d) Candidates must complete at least one field reviewed Resource Management System (RMS) plan which contains the following:

- A minimum of three land uses most commonly planned in the work area.
- Planned pest and nutrient management.
- A combination of engineering and ecological sciences conservation practices.

(1) The novice planner will be required to meet with the decision-maker in the development of this plan. A certified planner will accompany the novice planner to observe as data is gathered and alternatives are offered to the client.

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(2) The candidate will be expected to demonstrate competency in the planning process and plan development.

(3) The observer will evaluate the planner's involvement with the decision-maker (landowner or land operator) in the planning process and whether all resource concerns associated with the conservation management unit (CMU) are adequately addressed. The observer will note his observations in his recommendations for initial planner certification. This conservation plan will also be reviewed by the Area Resource Conservationist prior to final delivery to the decision-maker.

(e) NRCS certified conservation planners are responsible for keeping their own individual development plans updated to reflect conservation planning training completed to maintain or increase their skill level. Training to maintain and update conservation planning certification skills will be reviewed once every three years by the State Resource Conservationist and State Conservation Engineer, and recommendations for renewal will be approved by the State Conservationist.

(3) The Area Conservationists are to inform the State Resource Conservationist of planners that have completed the minimum certification requirements.

(f) The Tennessee State Conservationist will provide annual instructions to address maintaining certified conservation planner status. At a minimum, it will require an annual review at the Area level of one RMS conservation plan prepared by a certified planner during the previous 12 months. A 5 percent spot check of the plans reviewed at the area level will be conducted by the State Resource Conservationist and State Conservation Engineer.

(1) Each certified conservation planner's designation will be reviewed at least once every three years by the State Resource Conservationist.

(2) A sufficient number of conservation plans will be reviewed to determine that the conservation plans meet the NRCS planning policy and follow the procedures and guidelines listed in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH).

(3) If an individual fails to meet the criteria at the Area or State level review for the certified conservation planner designation, the certification status will be revoked and the individual must be recertified before providing conservation planning assistance. Specific guidance will be provided to the employee on steps necessary to re-establish certification.

### TN409.9-2(2)

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